

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Clarice Begemann, APRN, Nurse Practitioner with Fair Haven Community Health Care, in New Haven, CT.

I stand in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. We need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

I have worked with immigrants and refugees for over 30 years, the last 20 at Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven, where I have cared for many students who came to the United States as unaccompanied minors.

I have seen numerous cases where students did not receive the care needed due to the cost of healthcare and their families' inability to pay.

Teeth that might be able to be saved are pulled after weeks of suffering, because it is cheaper. Numerous cases of molars left rotting to the gum line.

A bill for an X-ray prevents a teen from getting follow-up after an abnormal chest X-ray during immigration.

A boy whose forearm deformity from a fall off a bicycle prevents full movement of his forearm. Can't afford the referral to orthopedics, and will have a life-long disability in his dominant arm.

Fears of inability to pay medical bills lead to long delays in prenatal care.

And then there are the non- visible wounds, those that come from years of separation then reunification with family, and the difficulty of finding fluent mental health counselors to help the family heal.

These teenagers need access to affordable health care. Health care for all leads to healthier individuals and a healthier society as a whole.

This past week, I was able to provide the required school physical and vaccines at no charge to the family in our School Based Health Center. In talking with the student's mother, I learned that she had not had any medical care while living in CT for more than ten years. I encouraged her to get an exam and cervical and breast cancer screening at Fair Haven Community Health Care, and explained the sliding scale fee.

I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask that the committee work towards a solution that recognizes that no human is illegal.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Clarice Begemann, APRN
Nurse Practitioner
Wilbur Cross School Based Health Center